



POLICY Project's Approach to HIV/AIDS

ANSWERING the *Call*

The POLICY Project works with civil society and government partners in developing countries to facilitate the development of high quality, sustainable family planning, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and safe motherhood policies and programs. POLICY works in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia and the Near East, Europe and Eurasia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

POLICY embraces a multisectoral approach to HIV/AIDS. The challenge of HIV/AIDS cannot be addressed effectively if it is treated narrowly as a public health or medical issue alone. HIV/AIDS is interconnected with and exacerbated by a host of factors (e.g., poverty, gender), and it has the ability to affect all sectors of society. Meaningful strategies to prevent the spread of HIV, care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), and mitigate the impacts of the epidemic require the mobilization and coordination of efforts and resources across sectors.

The POLICY Project collaborates with a range of in-country partners to strengthen support for and enhance the *synergy* of broad-based, multisectoral HIV/AIDS policies and programs. Enhancing institutional and personal

capacity to respond to the ever-increasing demands of the epidemic stimulates improved policy, program, and operational responses. This approach also encourages increased funding at global, national, and local levels.

POLICY's HIV/AIDS Partners

PLWHA Associations. Until PLWHA are actively involved in policymaking, program design, and community mobilization, prospects for addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic will be diminished. This involvement not only empowers PLWHA themselves, but also improves prevention, care, support, and mitigation efforts.

In working with PLWHA associations and networks, POLICY builds on international standards and guidelines, including the Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS Principle and the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

POLICY's objectives are to promote the meaningful involvement of PLWHA and affected communities in the policy process; build the capacity of NGOs; develop strategies to help PLWHA confront and reduce stigma; strengthen the ability of PLWHA networks to exercise and advocate for human rights protections; and facilitate regional and international collaboration.

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Faith-based Organizations (FBOs).

FBOs in developing countries not only provide spiritual guidance for their followers, they are also often the primary providers of a variety of local health and social services. Situated within communities and building on relationships of trust and respect,

FBOs have the ability to influence the attitudes and behaviors of their fellow community members.

POLICY provides technical assistance to FBOs with the aim of strengthening their capacity to provide care and support services for PLWHA, as well as reduce the stigma and silence surrounding HIV/AIDS. Much of POLICY's work with FBOs takes place as part of the Communities Responding to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic (CORE) Initiative. Sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by POLICY, this initiative provides technical and financial assistance to faith and community groups that are seeking to increase advocacy, reduce stigma and discrimination, and improve care and support in developing countries.

World of Work. The POLICY Project collaborates with organizations in the world of work, such as trade unions and businesses, to develop appropriate workplace HIV/AIDS policies and programs. These policies and programs should reduce discrimination against PLWHA, safeguard employee benefits (e.g., health insurance and leave), and serve as a conduit for awareness-raising and prevention efforts. POLICY also works with civil society groups to raise awareness of the rights of PLWHA in the employment sector, and has contributed to the development of postgraduate programs that focus on training students how to deal with HIV/AIDS and employment issues.

In addition, POLICY uses computer models, such as the AIDS Impact Model (AIM) and GOALS, to project the demographic characteristics and effects of the epidemic, as well as the economic consequences of HIV/AIDS and the relative costs and benefits of different strategies to fight the disease.

Development Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs). Development NGOs working in areas other than health are an important focus of POLICY's work. HIV/AIDS has the potential to reverse – and hinder the future achievement of – hard won economic and human development gains in many countries. NGOs working in a variety of sectors, such as agriculture, education, youth, and community development, should be equipped to address HIV/AIDS.

The POLICY Project seeks to mainstream HIV/AIDS issues into the activities of NGOs operating in the development sector, including professional associations, women's groups, environmental organizations, and others. POLICY provides technical and logistical

Examples of POLICY's Recent HIV/

- Designing and facilitating a participatory strategic planning process to guide the HIV/AIDS activities of the Anglican Church for the Province of Southern Africa and its local dioceses.
- Building the capacity of multisectoral citizens' groups to confront stigma in Mexico.
- Working with NGOs in Ukraine to document the barriers PLWHA face when trying to access reproductive health services and recommend needed reforms in laws, policies, and regulations, with a particular focus on upholding human rights, improving access to services for HIV-positive pregnant women, and reducing mother-to-child transmission.
- Providing technical assistance to the National Action Committee for AIDS in developing and advocating for the 36-month HIV/AIDS Emergency Action Plan that was adopted by President Obasanjo of Nigeria in 2001.

assistance to NGOs to improve understanding of the links between HIV/AIDS and development, as well as enhance advocacy, strategic planning, collaboration, financing, and monitoring and evaluation capabilities with regard to HIV/AIDS.

Government Departments and Agencies. Political commitment and government support are essential for ensuring program sustainability, improving resource allocation, coordinating multisectoral engagement, and providing safeguards against discrimination. Working with and building the capacity of government departments and agencies is, therefore, central to POLICY's objective of facilitating the development of improved responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The POLICY Project's government partners include national AIDS councils, national AIDS control programs, and relevant departments at the national and local levels (e.g., health, education, labor, welfare, finance, uniformed services, women, social services, and transportation). POLICY works with these government entities to develop guidelines, strategic plans, operational policies, and financing mechanisms to address HIV/AIDS.

AIDS Activities

- Assessing and recommending reforms to remove operational policy barriers to the integration of FP/RH, maternal and child health, and HIV/AIDS services in Jamaica.
- Supporting the Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) NGO in developing "Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Employment" that were later officially adopted by Zambia's National HIV/AIDS Secretariat.
- Collaborating with UNAIDS and the U.S. Census Bureau to develop estimates of HIV/AIDS prevalence worldwide.
- Promoting the development and institutionalization of the Tanzania Parliamentarians' AIDS Coalition (TAPAC) as a means to strengthen national commitment to address HIV/AIDS.
- Contributing to a review of national policies affecting orphans and vulnerable children.

POLICY also assists individual parliamentarians and coalitions of lawmakers in making HIV/AIDS a national priority and strengthening commitment to address the epidemic. The project's computer simulations enhance policymakers' understanding of the impacts of HIV/AIDS and the costs and benefits of different policy and program strategies.

POLICY's Crosscutting Issues

POLICY has identified three crosscutting issues that must be integrated into each aspect of the project's work, whether it is strengthening popular support, formulating policies, generating information, or building capacity.

Human Rights. As they are linked to the success of so many other activities, reducing stigma and discrimination and promoting human rights are priorities for the POLICY Project. POLICY views human rights not just as one important aspect of HIV/AIDS policies and programs; rather, they are the very foundation on which effective strategies to address the epidemic must be built.

POLICY's activities in this arena are designed to improve understanding of the human rights issues related to HIV/AIDS and provide strategies to address these issues. This includes: (1) legal reviews and recommendations for policy and legislative reform; (2) the development of indicators to measure human rights abuses and evaluate programs on the basis of human rights criteria; (3) advocacy and awareness raising to reduce stigma and discrimination; (4) capacity development to help PLWHA confront stigma and discrimination; and (5) facilitation of ongoing discussion of human rights issues through the provision of current information to staff and organizational partners.

Proof Positive: Success Stories from the Field

Cambodia

The POLICY Project is committed to the meaningful inclusion of PLWHA in policy formulation and advocacy. The challenge has been to *operationalize* this principle. For the past 12 months, POLICY/Cambodia has been working with other local organizations and stakeholders to increase understanding of the most effective and sustainable approaches for PLWHA mobilization and networking as means of increasing PLWHA participation in decision making and policy formulation.

In collaboration with the Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance (KHANA), POLICY/Cambodia has supported the establishment of the Cambodian Positive Network (CPN+), the country's first national network of PLWHA organizations. CPN+'s mission is to build a strong and united voice for Cambodian PLWHA so that they are able to participate in the policy dialogue and advocacy process.

POLICY/Cambodia provides CPN+ with an intensive mentor-ing and technical assistance program focused on capacity development and institutional strengthening of network members. A two-part advocacy training program has been developed to increase the capacity of PLWHA advocates. As a result of this training, CPN+ is working on advocacy campaigns designed to address access to treatment, stigma and discrimination, participation in formal decision making processes, and legislative reform.

CPN+ has been instrumental in demonstrating that reducing HIV-related stigma and building the self-esteem of PLWHA will assist in the creation of an environment more supportive of collaboration for effecting and sustaining the behavior changes needed to stem the epidemic.

CPN+ is staffed by PLWHA and within one year of its establishment it is becoming a respected organization within Cambodia and is increasing its profile and influence. POLICY/Cambodia aims to continue to support this work and will adapt lessons learned to PLWHA in other countries within the region.

Gender. The POLICY Project recognizes that gender roles and relations are central to addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. "Gender" refers to the characteristics, roles, and identities that societies assign to groups of people based on their sex and norms regarding sexuality. Men and women's ability to benefit from prevention, care, support, and mitigation policies and programs differs according to the particular context's gender relations.

POLICY promotes gender-sensitive approaches and works to enhance understanding of the interrelationships between gender and HIV/AIDS (e.g., gender-based violence or the special needs of men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM)). The project strives to develop policy responses that account for and respond to the gender norms, roles, and inequities that so profoundly shape the epidemic and its impact.

POLICY's activities to advance gender-informed responses take many forms. For example, POLICY collaborates with women's NGOs to strengthen their capacity to participate in the policy process and, increasingly, is identifying strategies to encourage male involvement in gender and HIV policy dialogue. In our work with government counterparts, we help generate research, facilitate dialogue, guide planning processes, and build capacity to advance strategies that both improve HIV/AIDS programs and promote gender equity.

Youth, Orphans, and Other Vulnerable Children.

Youth have special needs when it comes to HIV/AIDS, including access to youth-oriented prevention and support services, but they also require programs that enhance life choices and opportunities (e.g., education, employment). POLICY works with government and civil society partners to review and develop policies that address youth issues. The project also conducts and disseminates research on the demographic impact of HIV/AIDS and facilitates advocacy for youth issues.

Children and families are also affected in myriad ways when one or both of the parents become infected with

South Africa

In collaboration with the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) and the National HIV/AIDS and STI Directorate, the POLICY Project works to strengthen the Women in Partnership Against AIDS (WIPAA) Initiative. WIPAA seeks to broaden the role of women's organizations in the fight against HIV/AIDS; build the knowledge, skills, and capacity of these organizations; and establish women's initiatives at national and provincial levels.

For nearly two years, POLICY/South Africa has been actively involved in the establishment and capacity development of the WIPAA Initiative and its partners through a series of workshops, trainings, and strategic planning exercises. These activities are designed to inform WIPAA and its partners about relevant HIV/AIDS issues; improve local decision-making and collaboration; highlight the role of women's organizations in implementing the National HIV/AIDS Plan for 2000-2005; and develop advocacy skills.

During Phase I of the project, more than 300 women have been trained. Both a national committee and nine provincial committees have been established, and a national summit was convened to review current activities, identify training needs, and articulate guidelines for future program development. Phase II is under way and focuses on strengthening advocacy and program management skills, as well as developing provincial plans to address mother-to-child transmission, voluntary counseling and testing, home-based care, orphans, and female barrier methods.

HIV. Given the nature and severity of the epidemic in developing countries, families and communities form the front line in responses to the plight of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

POLICY supports the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS that calls for development and implementation of policies and strategies that strengthen government, family, and community capacity to respond to the mounting OVC crisis. The project assists in the development of national and operational policies that facilitate government agencies, NGOs, FBOs, and other stakeholders in providing support to families and communities caring for OVC.

Recent examples of POLICY's work with OVC issues include: developing a white paper that will identify gaps in national responses and provide recommendations for realistic interventions to address OVC concerns; assisting stakeholders in selected African countries outline plans of action for implementing policies and programs to support OVC; and publishing a report on Nigerian orphans that is helping policymakers understand the various facets of the country's OVC situation.

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